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From the Editor

3

The John J. Ford, Jr. Sale Part XIII
(by John W. Adams) **3**

The Somers Medal (by Kim Rud)
6

**Revolutionary War Medal
Discovered at Princeton (by Alan
Stahl)** **9**

**Adolph Weinmen and the Society of
Medallist (by Scott H. Miller)** **12**

Letters to the Editor **15**

Coming Events

January 14th, MCA Meeting at noon
at International Coin Show at the Waldorf
Astoria Hotel in New York City.

January 16, 2006, French Colonials
and Betts Medals I of John J. Ford, Jr.

May 23-25, 2006 Betts Medals II of
John J. Ford, Jr.

October 17-19, 2006 Indian Peace
Medals I of John J. Ford, Jr.

Stack's auction schedule is published
on their website www.stackss.com since last

minute changes to the Ford schedule have been known to occur unexpectedly.

From the Editor

This issue caps a banner year featuring continuous monthly publication, great articles, enhanced photography, and our first offprints. We give thanks to our authors who have created a plethora of high quality material and award special kudos to Thelma Fisher who prepares (and mails) each and every copy of the Advisory.

The pending sale of John Ford's Betts medals—about which more below—will be a special test of our branch of the hobby. The material will sell—we have no doubts on that score—but will the new owners be inclined to share their enthusiasm?

For example, there is a gathering group of Admiral Vernon collectors out there but will your Ford acquisitions cause you to break radio silence to tell us why this specialty deserves attention? Similarly for Franco-American jetons, proclamations, French mint medals and on and on. Our New Years wish is that the transfer of ownership from John Ford to a large number of collectors will evoke a cornucopia of written enthusiasm.

Perhaps the New Year will also bring us a Club medal(s). Perhaps it will bring up an issue or two of the long dormant Medal Cabinet. We can be your voice but only you the members can supply the energy to increase the output.

Happy Holidays! -- Ye Editor

The John J. Ford, Jr. Sale, Part XIII

(by John W. Adams)

The John J. Ford, Jr. Sale, Part XIII, will take place on January 16th. The first half of it contains French

Colonial coins, a collection of such breadth and quality that the cataloguer predicts, "renewed interest in this difficult but rewarding series will arise." We do not doubt this prediction but our focus will be on the "Betts Medals" that follow the colonials.

In his classic American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals, C. Wyllis Betts covered more than two centuries with medals from a dozen countries in eight languages. This series, numbered from one to 623, is simply too broad and too complex for any but the most ambitious collector. Fortunately, the series can be broken down into user-friendly segments and more fortunately still, the cataloguer of Ford XIII approaches his task in this manner.

The first segment delineated is the Franco-American jetons, issued from 1751 to 1758. The scope of this offering—no less than 65 pieces—is the largest since the W.W.C. Wilson Sale in 1925. Ford assembled his holdings over a 40-year period from dozens of sources, putting the lie to those who have suggested that Ford acquired good material only because of fortuitous connections with F.C.C. Boyd and Wayte Raymond.

The Franco-American jetons are an excellent entry point for the new collector because many pieces will sell at less than \$500 and, at the same time, the rationale behind the issuance of the jetons provides excellent insights into the French and Indian War. Education at bargain prices! Then, collectors who seek a real challenge can begin work on the pivotal issue concerning these jetons: which ones are "originals" and which are restrikes? On this issue, the cataloguer

makes a brilliant contribution by providing for each lot the weight, thickness, edge description and obverse by Raymond letters [Raymond letters derived from the 1925 Wilson Sale; reproduction plates, which are readily obtainable, are a necessity for anyone who gets interested].

Over the years, a number of competent numismatists have published monographs on which obverses are original and which are not. All of these have missed the mark, but cataloguer Hodder provides plenty of clues to get students back on the right track. This said, much value remains to be added to this subject and perhaps some of those who acquire Ford jetons will do the adding.

Lots 846 to 870 represent for the new collector perhaps the best opportunity of all. The catalogue calls them "European Peace and Treaty Medals." John Ford called them "Davenport Medals," named after Frances Gardner Davenport, who published four octavo volumes translating every European treaty that affected "the United States and Its Dependencies" from 1455 to 1815.

These medals should have been included in Betts but somehow were overlooked. Ford "discovered" them (and Davenport) late in his collecting career. As a result, he only scratched the surface but the 25 medals that he did acquire will give the novice an appreciation of the talents of such artists as Sebastian Dadler, Johann Hohn, Christolph Adolfszoom and R. Arondeau.

If the reader is not turned on by the aesthetics, he or she will be turned on by the prices, with many lots likely to fetch under \$500 and few lots that will

exceed \$2000. The ultimate "turn on" is the history and there the best sources are Davenport (available as a reprint from Charlie Davis), Medallic Illustrations, Van Loon and Pax in Nummis. These sources will explain how the medals relate to America, telling a tale of another age when kings routinely went to war and then made peace by swapping real estate much like the modern game of Monopoly. For those who aspire to assembling a collection that will be superior to John Ford's, here is the field in which to do it.

The next series is the Admiral Vernon medals. There are 241 varieties listed in McCormick-Goodhart and perhaps another 25 that have been discovered since. With 50 different varieties, Ford is far from complete but his holding is the largest to appear in many years and, more important, is of outstanding quality. Vernon varieties can still be had for under \$100 in F-VF, but there is nothing at such a modest level in this offering. There are a handful of VF's but most of the lots are XF or AU, with no less than 14 mint state examples thrown in. We sense that there has been interest building in this segment and, if we are correct in this premise, then Ford XIII will push that interest to the next level. Ugly medals when found in the lower grades, Admiral Vernon's have a great deal of charm in the better states of preservation. A new collector would do well to acquire one or two of the Ford lots as a show piece(s), and then begin a more serious hunt for Vernon varieties at the F-VF level. The series has been classified by C.W. Betts, Storer, Milford Haven, Medallic Illustrations and Medina to name a few. The best of all is McCormick-Goodhart, an inexpensive

(and unprepossessing) booklet in gray paper covers. Though lacking in plates, this source is easy to use and, in our experience, the most accurate of all the texts.

After the Admiral Vernon's come 38 lots of John Law medals. This is by far the largest assemblage of such pieces to appear at auction. Indeed, Mr. Ford owns the best collection of John Law medals, public or private, ever formed.

Most of these medals satirize John Law because of the Mississippi Bubble that he is alleged to have caused. The share price of Law's Company rose from 150 livres to more than 10,000 livres before crashing to earth. People at the time deemed him a fool or a rascal but most probably the latter. The delicious irony is that nowadays Law is considered one of the greatest economic theorists of all time. The passage of time does lend perspective but seldom does that perspective change more dramatically than in the case of this Scottish (turned French) financier.

Deliciously ironic though they may be, John Law medals are not for the faint of heart. The prices will be high added to which the series is replete with R-7's and even R-8's. Newcomers would be well advised to look elsewhere, although everyone should read this section because the cataloguing is brilliant.

Next comes 42 lots of Central and South American proclamation medals. Whereas Ford's "procs" constitute a world-class collection, there are and have been collections that are better. This said no one has ever owned three Florida proclamations: Ford can boast a 1760 proclamation that is struck, another that is cast and a 1789 Florida proclamation

that is struck. Bidders will fantasize over these.

The next section of the catalogue is entitled "The New World 1556-1745, Discovery, Conquest and Occupation." This is a catchall segment for Betts numbers 1 through 170 and, from the standpoint of a new collector, needs further segmentation. There are 10 lots of Philip II medals dating to 1559-1560. These feature the artistry of Gianpaolo Poggini (one of the finest early engravers), who both cast and struck his medals. Prices should range in the low to mid four figures.

Far more expensive will be the half dozen medals celebrating Piet Heyn's capture, of the Spanish treasure fleet at Matanzas Bay in 1628. Made from captured silver, the medals are beautifully executed and represent Holland as it strove mightily to carve out a place in the New World. If one could afford a Piet Heyn piece, there are a number of less expensive medals dealing with treasury recovery that illustrate this most fascinating theme. In the treasure category are the St. Domingo medals of 1687 and the Vigo Bay medals of 1702. Betts treasure medals combined with coins recovered from wrecks (see the very first section of catalogue) would lead a numismatist into promising waters.

Lots 692 through 765 are mostly French medals celebrating various victories in the Western Hemisphere during the 17th century. The attractions of this group are solid craftsmanship and low (three figure) prices. More alluring to some will be the opportunity to explore (relatively) virgin territory. Little has been written on when these medals were actually made (typically they were not

made contemporary with the event celebrated) and almost nothing on how to tell an “original” from later restrikes. In our opinion, here is a big challenge for short money and, thanks to Mr. Ford, a corpus larger than any yet offered.

The remaining 80 lots in the catalogue are a hodge podge that typify the breadth of the Betts series. Great rarities are contained herein including the Darien, Oglethorpe and Calvert medals. No less than 25 lots deal with the capture in 1702 of the Spanish treasure fleet at Vigo Bay another 10 commemorate the fabled American Century Plant that blooms just once every 100 years and which became a central attraction in sundry botanical gardens in Europe.

Bottom line, Ford XIII is truly a landmark sale. Of all the Americana that John Ford collected, Betts medals were his passion. It was he that re-invented the series--invented it, really, in that not even C. Wyllys Betts collected it with equivalent success. Michael Hodder has catalogued the medals with his inimitable combination of writing skills, technical knowledge and discretion with regard to what is important. Thanks to Ford's passion, Hodder had a special opportunity and he seized it with distinction. The combination of great material and great descriptions offers medal collectors the opportunity of a lifetime.

The Somers Medal (by Kim Rud)

“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters” are immortalized in literature, music, and art. Also remembered are the ships

which provided venues for celebrated events. However, one ship connected to important creative works is forgotten; the U.S. brig Somers, subject of the Somers medal.

Launched at the New York Navy Yard in 1842, the Somers displaced 259 tons, had a waterline length of 100 feet, a 25-foot beam, and a draft of 12 feet. Her armament was 12 32-pound guns and carronades. On September 13th, 1842, she sailed to the west coast of Africa to deliver dispatches to Anglo-American naval forces engaged in the suppression of the slave trade. Also on board were cadets being trained in seamanship. Near the end of the voyage, the captain suspected a mutiny was at hand and on December 1st had a cadet and two sailors hanged. Since no overt act of mutiny had been committed, no formal trial convened, no chance given for the accused to testify, and, since the cadet was the Secretary of War's son, controversy ensued.

The captain was found innocent in a naval court, but not in the court of public opinion. Engaged in the debate were two men with naval and literary backgrounds who had been at odds for years; James Fenimore Cooper (*THE PATHFINDER, THE DEER SLAYER, THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS*) and James Slidell Mackenzie, author and captain of the Somers. When Mackenzie wrote an account of the mutiny, Cooper responded with an 80 page “elaborate review” of Mackenzie's naval trial.

Hermann Melville also had a connection to the tragedy. A cousin, Guert Ganesvoort, had been on the Somers during the Mutiny. After the forgotten author of *MOBY DICK* retired from the U.S. Customs Service, he began

his last novella inspired by events aboard the Somers. Titled **BILLY BUDD**, the story was reset on board a British warship during the 1790s. Perhaps Melville tried to exorcize personal demons over his son's suicide by writing about an innocent youth whose death was caused by a "bookish" captain. **BILLY BUDD**'s eventual publication in 1924 helped promote Melville's recognition as America's greatest 19th century novelist. W.H. Auden paid early homage to **BILLY BUDD** in his poem **HERMANN MELVILLE**.

Though a story devoid of female roles would seem an unsuitable choice for an opera, Giorgio Federico Ghedini set music to Salvatore Quasimodo's text and produced **BILLY BUDD** in Venice in 1949. In 1951, Britain's greatest composer of opera since Handel, Benjamin Britten, wrote his own **BILLY BUDD** to a text by Eric Crozier and E.M. Forster (**WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD**, **ROOM WITH A VIEW**, **A PASSAGE TO INDIA**, **HOWARD'S END**).

The tale's dramatic possibilities were first explored in the 1949 stage play **UNIFORM OF FLESH** (renamed **BILLY BUDD**) by Louis O. Coxe and Robert Chapman. Next in 1962, Peter Ustinov directed and starred in the film **BILLY BUDD** which also featured Robert Ryan, Terrance Stamp, Melvin Douglas, and David McCullum. In the 1999 film **BEAU TRAVAIL**, Claire Denis set the story in a French Foreign Legion garrison in Djibouti.

The Somer's final moments are depicted in medallic art. In an attempt to stop a vessel from breaking the blockade of the port of Veracruz during the Mexican-American War, she

foundered in one of the sudden and violent 'nortes' that beset the Mexican coast.* Out of a crew of 76 officers and men, 32 drowned and 7 were captured. In command was Lieutenant Raphael Semmes who later captained the spectacularly successful Civil War commerce raider C.S.S. **Alabama**.** Semmes' beliefs that the war was unnecessary and that the bloodshed inflicted on civilians excessive, may have been factors in his subsequent embrace of the Southern cause.

Semmes reported to Commodore Matthew C. Perry that "... it remains for me to report to you of the gallant and feeling manner, in which all the foreign men-of-war, lying at Sacrificios (Island), came to our rescue. They hoisted out and manned boats, immediately, and, at the hazard of their lives, put out to the wreck. They were, at first, driven back, by the violence of the wind and the sea, but renewed their efforts after the first lull, and had the unhooped for satisfaction of saving 14 more of our unfortunate companions. "To Captain Lambert, of the English frigate, Endymion; Captain Frankland, of the English corvette, Alarm; Commander Matson, of the English brig, Daring; Captain Dubut, of the French brig, Mercure; Captain Labredoyaire, of the French brig, Pylade; and Captain Puente, of the Spanish corvette, Maria Fernandez; who all sent boats, and supplied us with clothing and hospitably entertained us on board their

* See James P. Delagado's "Te Wreck of the U.S. Brig Somers (1842-1846)" in EXCAVATING SHIPS OF WAR, Anthony Nelson, Shropshire, England, 1998.

** 8 days after the Somers sank, the schooner Morris also sank off Veracruz. Her captain was John Winslow, later captain of the U.S.S. Kearsarge when she sank the Alabama.

ships, we owe a lasting debt of gratitude."

On March 34, 1847, the U.S. Congress authorized the presentation of gold and silver medals to the British, French, and Spanish officers and men who had rescued the crew of the Somers. By October 1850, U.S. Mint Director Robert M. Patterson recommended Charles Cushing Wright to the Navy Secretary to engrave the medals. Wright (1796-1854) also engraved medals for Major Generals Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor. His fee was \$1270. On April 10th, 1851, the dies were sent to the Mint where Chief Coiner Franklin Peale struck and sent to Washington 10 gold and 100 silver medals. Unfortunately, he didn't use the specified motto; PRO VITIA AMERICANA PRESERVADA (for saving an American life) and the medals were rejected and melted. The substitute reverse die cracked when being hardened and Wright was forced to engrave yet another die. However, another error did escape inspection. The medal states the Somers sank on December 10th, 1846, but in fact she sank on December 8th. Perhaps the error can be attributed to Commodore Matthew Perry. Though at Tampico on December 8th, Perry sailed to Veracruz and sent off a report to the Navy Secretary on December 12th which said the mishap occurred "the day before yesterday." In addition to the six captains that Semmes named in the rescue, the New Orleans Picayune of December 22, 1846 states that Lieutenant Tarleton and gunner Anthony of the frigate Endymion, Midshipman Fox of the brig Daring, and Lieutenant Petit of the brig Mercure distinguished themselves. They would seem to have been awarded the 10 gold

medals. In 1861 the Mint offered medals for sale to collectors and as late as 1877 it was still available in silver. A bronze specimen was offered in the Bushnell Sale.



The Somers story is a chain of contradictions: The Somers entered service on a mission to curtail slavery, but ended service in an attempt to subjugate a sovereign nation; a vessel

that had been a school for the education of youths was changed into a gallows to execute a young cadet; and an officer who had fought on the side of a stronger northern republic against a weaker southern republic found himself on the side of weaker southern states pitted against stronger northern states. The Somers medal reveals another link in this chain of contradictions: a scene in a struggle for national dominance off Veracruz is transformed into a scene of international compassion and rescue.

Obverse legend: SOMERS NAVIS AMERICANA, in the exergue ANTE VERACRUZ DEC 10TH, 1846. At the right edge: C.C. WRIGHT F.

Reverse legend: PRO VITIS AMERICANORUM CONSERVATIS, in the exergue: ENG. BY C.C. WRIGHT.

Acknowledgements

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Revolutionary War Medal Discovered at Princeton

(Alan Stahl, Curator of Numismatics, Princeton University)

A medal believed to have been awarded to Henry Lee for service in the Revolutionary War has been discovered in the collection of Princeton University's library and was put on public display for the first time on November 13, 2005. The silver medal was probably the result of an authorization by the Continental Congress for Henry Lee (popularly known as Light-Horse Harry) for the award of a gold medal for the Battle of Paulus Hook in 1779. Through a series of mishaps the gold medal was not made or awarded, and the Princeton one may have been made as a substitute for it. The medal surfaced in a numismatic auction in 1935, when the Friends of the Princeton University Library purchased it for \$100 and presented it to the school

in honor of Lee, a Princeton University alumnus of the class of 1774.

The medal is hand-engraved on a silver disk about the size of a silver dollar, and encircled in a decorative holder. This is not what was originally intended by the Continental Congress which, on September 22, 1779, voted that Lee be given a gold medal for his heroism in the battle that captured a British encampment in what is now Jersey City. The medal was to have been designed and struck in Paris, along with medals for such other Revolutionary War heroes as George Washington, Nathaniel Greene, and Anthony Wayne. When the other medals were finally received from France almost a decade later, it was discovered that the Lee medal had not been ordered. Lee appealed to Secretary-of-State Thomas Jefferson, who directed the newly established Philadelphia Mint to strike a replacement medal. The equipment of the Mint was inadequate for the task, and the new die, engraved by the Mint's first Chief Engraver Joseph Wright, broke before the medal could be produced.

The Princeton Lee medal appears to have been intended as a substitute for the failed Philadelphia medal. The technique of hand engraving of a silver base was used for other medals produced in America in this period, such as the medals awarded to the three captors of Major John André and the Indian Peace Medals of the Washington administration. The medal bears the inscription To Henry Lee for Valour & Patriotism on the obverse and Washington & Independence 1775-1783 on the reverse. Documentation of its manufacture and award has not yet been

Major John André and the Indian Peace Medals of the Washington administration. The medal bears the inscription To Henry Lee for Valour & Patriotism on the obverse and Washington & Independence 1775-1783 on the reverse. Documentation of its manufacture and award has not yet been found. The most likely explanation for its appearance in the numismatic market is the circumstance that in 1810, to meet the demands of his creditors and be released from debtor's prison, Lee was forced to sell all of his possessions.

The medal was sold as lot #771 at the January 25, 1935, auction of Thomas L. Elder, one of the leading American coin dealers of the period, where it brought \$100, a large sum for a silver medal at the depths of the Depression. Elder's catalogue states that the medal had been in a very old American family for many years and came from the South. The Princeton Friends of the Library had the medal suspended from a silver pin back by an orange and black ribbon and put in a custom leather box for presentation to the University President Harold W. Dodds at a banquet at the Plaza Hotel in New York on April 25, 1935. While a description of the presentation was published in the *New York Evening Sun*, no notice of the new owner reached the numismatic press, and the medal's whereabouts have been unknown for the past seventy years.

The general history of the Lee medal had long been known to Princeton's Curator of Numismatics, Alan Stahl, who ten years before had published a catalogue of medals authorized by the Continental Congress in public collections ("Medals of the *Comitia Americana* series in the

collection of the American Numismatic Society and other public institutions," in Philip L. Mossman, ed., *Coinage of the American Federation Period*, Coinage of the Americas Conference Proceedings 11 (New York, 1996), pp. 261-346). He came upon the medal in its presentation box this summer while planning the numismatic display for an exhibition to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Friends of the Library. The piece was not housed with other medals in the library's numismatic collection, but was in its objects collection, alongside such items as the key to Thomas Jefferson's wine cellar, a snuffbox given to Benjamin Franklin by Louis XVI, and a block of tea certified to be from the Boston Tea Party.

Dr. Stahl admits to having been skeptical at first of the authenticity of the piece and to withholding final judgment on it pending further research. "The main point arguing in its favor," he notes, "is the price that it fetched at auction by a reputable dealer. The inscription suggests the input of Lee – the obverse proclamation of honor and valor (two qualities he was publicly accused of lacking in the rough-and-tumble politics of the early Republic) and the association with Washington on the reverse (Lee is best known for his funeral oration for Washington which popularized the epithet 'First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.'")

The medal will be on view with other pieces from the University's Numismatic Collection, including two pewter continental 'dollars', large cents from 1793 and 1794, a silver dollar of 1794, the Thomas Jefferson inaugural medal of 1801 and an Indian Peace Medal of James Madison (Princeton class

of 1771). Also included are a signed letter of Lee to the New Jersey quartermaster from 1780 and a signed letter of the same year from George Washington to Lee approving Lee's plan to capture Benedict Arnold. The exhibition is on view in the Firestone Library's main exhibit gallery through April 23 on weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays) and on weekends from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is free.

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ADOLPH WEINMAN AND THE SOCIETY OF MEDALISTS

(by Scott H. Miller)

While much has been published in recent years on the medals issued by the Society of Medalists, most of these works have dealt with providing a catalogue or current prices. Unfortunately, little research has been done on the background of the medals themselves. The correspondence between Adolph Weinman and Clyde Trees of the Medallic Art Company offer some insight into the Society, as well as Weinman's own medal issued in 1949.¹

In a letter dated September 25, 1935 Trees wrote to Weinman noting that Anthony de Francisci was creating the medal to be issued November 1; the decision to select de Francisci was made by the Advisory Committee following a conversation between Weinman and Trees. Trees also reminded Weinman of the reduced fees to be paid and that he

had promised to do a medal, tentatively the one to be issued May 1, 1937.

Weinman did not follow through with a medal, and Trees wrote on December 6 relating how the Advisory Committee was "crushed" in their disappointment. Dr. R. Tait McKenzie had agreed to do the next medal, with a limited competition planned for the following fall. The Committee, made up of Herbert Adams, James Earle Fraser, Hermon MacNeil, Frederick MacMonnies and Paul Manship, came up with the idea of a competition following a suggestion made by MacMonnies. Each of the five members selected a man and the contestants would then submit sketches. It was also suggested that the "final award will be made by the contestants themselves." Adams thought it an "interesting" concept while Manship found it a real "corker."

Trees thought MacMonnies' plan "rather unique" as he explained it to Weinman, "It is absolutely a secret ballot and one man goes in the room at one time and his own particular model is removed from the room before he enters so that each man will vote on four models and will only make one vote. For heaven's sake, keep this confidential. It seems to me it is rather intriguing. I hope if they do it, it doesn't end in a 'bomb shell'." Tree then notes that he would like to see Howard's model. This would appear to relate to Weinman's son who eventually submitted a design rejected by the Society, and will be discussed later.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all information comes from correspondence between Adolph Weinman and Clyde Trees between September 25, 1939 and May 13, 1949 found in the Archives of American Art.



The following year saw little movement by Weinman towards a model, as on November 22, Trees again wrote to express his hope that Weinman would submit a model by March 1 for the Spring issue of May 1, 1938. Weinman responded two weeks later (December 4, 1937) stating that he would "prefer to leave the medallic field to younger men..." Despite having made several sketches, nothing satisfactory emerged. Weinman indicated he would do the medal eventually, but would not commit to any date for it.

On March 9, 1938, Weinman again wrote Trees advising him that he would do a medal when a really bright idea hits him, but that for now, inspiration is in a rather nebulous state. The following year (February 7, 1939) Trees again tried to prompt Weinman to do a medal, passing along a suggestion from Herbert Adams "Trees, I don't know how it can be done and it will be a big job, but if you can get somebody to cover in a medal what's wrong with the world today, namely 'Liberty' the man who does it as well as the Society is made".

By the end of World War II, Weinman had still not submitted designs for a medal, and was reminded of this by Clyde Trees on January 22, 1946. At the same time, Trees suggested that Weinman's young son (Robert Weinman) make a medal for the Society, offering any assistance necessary, including that of the younger Weinman's father. "I think he would enjoy showing his sketches to the boys on the Advisory Board and they are really awfully nice about it. All of them are very cooperative. I will go along with him and hold his hand if he wants me to, or they can even be mailed out for comment if he is bashful. I am sincere about this. That could be a great start and with Papa's advice, it really should be something".

In response (January 26, 1946) Weinman again acknowledged his promise to do a medal, but told Trees not to "count too heavily on it in the near future". He also thanked Trees for thinking of his son and promised to tell him about it. Finally, in a note dated January 9, 1949, Clyde Trees confirmed that medals would be forthcoming from two apparently reluctant sculptors:

January 9, 1948

James Fraser

: The Culprits

Adolph Weinman

Paul Manship
Chester Beach: The Fait Accompli Committee
Walker Hancock

One of the most pleasant tasks I have to perform in this snow white New Year is to confirm "in writing" that

delightfully consummated deal whereby one Adolph and one James, in unison, fervently and devoutly agreed, "in the presence of witnesses" and met with one "hand and seal", but six of them, one on top of the other, to make, by said Adolph, the second issue medal of 1948 and by said James, the second issue medal of 1949 for the Society of Medalists.

So all in all if for no other reason it was a great day that December 18th, 1947 when Adolph complained he had a reverse, but sold it (who wouldn't) and James complained he's busy (and who isn't) but finally with a smile, signed on the "undotted line".

Oh, yes, deadline dates for second issues is September 1st.

Adolph and James are out on a limb and with this "advance billing" their medals had better be good.

Clyde Trees, The Confirmer.

Despite his agreement to produce the second issue medal for 1948, Weinman found that due to eyestrain, he would be unable to complete the models in time and so informed Trees on September 8, 1948. In the same letter, Weinman mentions his unhappiness over making medals in general. "I shall keep my promise of many years ago, but it all amounts to this, that my decision not to make any more medals was correct, **it's** too great a tax on my eyes and to say nothing about my general disposition, never too good when I have made medals and perfectly terrible now, even though I exert terrific will power to appear rational to my friends". Weinman's eyestrain appears to have ended fairly quickly, as his medal was published as the thirty-ninth issue in May 1939.

As previously mentioned, Clyde Trees wrote in his letter of December 6, 1935 that he would like to see Howard's medal. Trees also mentioned that if he wanted to see it reduced, they would do so in wax. A number of years ago a 230mm bronze plaque by Howard Weinman was offered by an antique dealer in New York. In a conversation several years later, Robert Weinman indicated that the plaque was for a medal rejected by the Society of Medalists and depicted Hiawatha's father. It is a dynamic portrayal of a nude Indian warrior and older male battling among soaring crags.

For a description of the scene read Longfellow's The Song of Hiawatha, chapter IV "Hiawatha and Mudjekeewis", where Hiawatha seeks his father:

So he journeyed westward,
westward,
Left the fleetest deer behind him,
Left the antelope and bison;
Crossed the rushing Esconaba,
Crossed the mighty Mississippi,
Passed the Mountains of the Prairie,
Passed the land of Crows and Foxes,
Passed the dwellings of the Blackfeet,
Came unto the Rocky Mountains,
To the kingdom of the West-Wind,
Where upon the gusty summits
Sat the ancient Mudjekeewis,
Ruler of the winds of heaven.

Filled with awe was Hiawatha
At the aspect of his father.
On the air about him wildly
Tossed and streamed his cloudy tresses,
Gleamed like drifting snow his tresses,
Glared like Ishkoodah, the comet,
Like the star with fiery tresses...

Later, the two battle:

Then up started Hiawatha,
And with threatening look and gesture
Laid his hand upon the black rock,
On the fatal Wawbeek laid it,
With his mittens, Minjekahwun,
Rent the jutting crag asunder,
Smote and crushed it into fragments,
Hurled them madly at his father,
The remorseful Mudjekeewis,
For his heart was hot within him,
Like a living coal his heart was.

But the ruler of the West-Wind
Blew the fragments backward from him,
With the breathing of his nostrils,
With the tempest of his anger,
Blew them back at his assailant;
Seized the bulrush, the Apukwa,
Dragged it with its roots and fibres
From the margin of the meadow,
From its ooze the giant bulrush;
Long and loud laughed Hiawatha!

Then began the deadly conflict,
Hand to hand among the mountains;
From his eyry screamed the eagle,
The Keneu, the great war-eagle,
Sat upon the crags around them,
Wheeling flapped his wings above them.

Like a tall tree in the tempest
Bent and lashed the giant bulrush;
And in masses huge and heavy Crashing
fell the fatal Wawbeek;
Till the earth shook with the tumult
And confusion of the battle,
And the air was full of shoutings,
And the thunder of the mountains,
Starting, answered, "Baim-wawa!"

Unfortunately, while a reduced version of this plaque has been seen, no information about the other side of this rejected medal has so far been located.

Letters to the Editor

Hello, my name is Jeff McGaffey and I am trying to find info on a medallion that was given to my father. It is made of bronze. The front is an angel with unfurled wings holding a long shield in the left hand and what looks to be a sword in the right. The back looks to be a crest or shield with an eagle on the top. Could you give me any info or put me in contact with someone who can.



Dear John,

I'm writing to make a correction to Mr. Alexander's fine article. I have just 1 subject from the series, Mark Twain, in both metals. I bought the medals at a flee market many years ago, long before I got interested in medals per se; I simply saw in them a nice image of one of my favorite writers.

Because I knew nothing about medals at the time of my purchase, I (1) hugely overpaid for them, but, more importantly, (2) they were in a less than pristine condition. Because my "silver" one is worn - unlike Mr. Alexander's - I can tell you that, its "999 silver"

edgemark notwithstanding, it is not made of silver, but is merely silverED. When I noticed that, I did another test, which also confirmed that it was not silver. A will not try to dispute Mr. Alexander's guess that many of these were melted down - but will only venture a guess that the silver contents of the resulting bullion was rather lesser than hoped-for.

I hope you will forward that e-mail to Mr. Alexander - and that he will find it at least amusing, if not informative...
6456.00.0

Best,

Lev Tsitrin